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ABSTRACT

The feasibility of and disparity between pronouncement and actual practice in secondary school developmental programs are discussed. The author states that, while systematic development of reading competencies and interests are the purported goals, the actual status of developmental reading varies greatly as reported in various studies. Smith (1963) found that by applying criteria of comprehensiveness and quality to 114 schools, seven had good programs. In California (Graham, 1969), 82 percent of the reading programs were remedial. In New Mexico (Bowren, 1970), the programs were remedial and isolated from the rest of the school. In general, trends indicate that (1) the English teachers handle reading classes, (2) programs are in the experimental stage, (3) most are short-term reading and study classes taught in conjunction with content classes (usually English), and (4) only a few offer separate reading classes and free or sustained reading. Problems were listed which limit developmental programs, and it was concluded that teaching of reading and study skills in content classes, widening of scope to include developmental reading, improving program direction, and providing trained personnel will all help make a secondary developmental reading program feasible and effective. References are included. (BM)

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Implications of Some Current Issues and Practices for the Reading Teacher

Secondary Developmental Reading Programs -- Are They Feasible?

Friday, April 23, 10:30 A. M.

Secondary developmental programs--are they feasible?, is the question this group is to address itself to this morning, and well it might when we look at the disparity between pronouncements about secondary developmental programs, and actual practice--but more of that later.

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The Goal of Developmental Reading

First, a statement as to what a developmental reading program purports to accomplish. A developmental reading program has as its purpose the systematic and sequential development of reading competencies and interests on the part of all students

toward increasingly higher levels of maturity using content of increasing difficulty and complexity. In contradistinction to remedial and corrective programs which are organized to improve the competencies of the handicapped readers, hopefully few in number, the developmental program is for all learners who are progressing normally in reading in relation to their capacity. The developmental program may be organized in various ways, from reading classes continued sequentially from the elementary grades through junior and senior high school, to reading taught in close conjunction with the several content areas.

The Status of Developmental Reading

Fortunately for me, I am not supposed to attempt to answer the question posed. My mission is to provide a rationale or context for the issue, along with pertinent studies that have a bearing on the question. The speaker who follows is to draw from this whatever conclusions are relevant. To this end I shall review selected reports describing the status of developmental reading in secondary schools. We shall look at various types of programs that have been reported, and finally we shall indicate some of the problems that seem to be inherent in organizing these programs.

The idea of developmental reading on the secondary level is by no means recent. In fact the first professional article I was fortunate to have published was written in 1940 while I was a

graduate student and was titled, "Guidance in Reading for the Few or All?" (1940) In it I posed a question that certainly was not original with me, even in 1940. "To be more specific," I said, "shall we emphasize remedial reading for a few, or (developmental) reading for all?" This morning we merely rephrase the question and ask, "Is such a program feasible in the first place?"

Within the last three or four years several statewide studies have been reported that give us some answer to the question I posed thirty years ago. Farr, Laffey, and Brown (1970) reported on the status of secondary reading in Indiana, Bowren (1970) in New Mexico, Graham (1969) in California, Larson (1969) in Minnesota, Gibson and Vander Meulen (1968) in Illinois, and Martin (1969) in the upper Midwest. Chronister and Ahrend (1968) investigated the secondary reading programs in the schools of British Columbia, and Squire (1965) reported the results of a national study of high school English programs which included data on the status of reading.

Let me begin by making a generalization, turning then, to several of these studies in support of it. In spite of the writing and speaking that have been done over the years concerning the necessity and value of secondary developmental reading, in spite of conference time that has been given to it, and the studies and reports that have been made attesting to its need, we are still a long way from having wide spread implementation of the idea of continued, organized, developmental reading for all secondary students.

Though one is able to find secondary schools in which reading is being taught, most of the instruction is still remedial. Attesting to this fact is the state-wide survey of reading programs in California (Graham, 1969). Graham found that though reading was being taught in 78 per cent of the schools surveyed, 82 per cent of the programs were organized around special classes stressing remedial techniques. Sixty-three per cent of the respondents claimed that they were trying to involve the total school staff, but admitted that not very much actually was being done to achieve this goal.

In New Mexico Bowren found that in schools where reading services were reported the programs were organized as isolated entities, purely remedial in scope rather than as a "cooperative component of the curriculum." "There seemed to be little concept of reading as permeating the whole curriculum," he wrote (Bowren, 1970). Moreover, Bowren found a surprising lack of concern on the part of secondary administrators regarding the need for reading services to reach all secondary school pupils in all curricular areas.

Martin (1969) reported the results of a secondary reading survey which was essentially a follow-up of a study conducted by Simmons in 1963 involving five upper Midwest states. Though in the five years between the two studies the number of programs had increased and improved, Martin contended that there was a long way to go before one could assume a "theoretically sound" reading program that made provisions for all students including the handicapped readers. Chronister and Ahrend (1968) found that of 216 secondary schools in British Columbia only 33 included a developmental

reading program. In these schools responsibility for the program was chiefly in the hands of English teachers. This being true no assumption could be made that students were receiving instruction in reading and study skills involved in the other content fields. This would be especially true since the writers found that only a few of the English teachers had formal instruction in reading.

Squire (1965) paints a grim picture of the secondary reading situation from findings derived from the National Study of High School English Programs completed under the auspices of the National Council of Teachers of English. Naturally Squire was concerned with reading as taught by English teachers in English classes where presumably the largest number of students was being met. But here, where we might assume that if anyplace in the curriculum reading was being taught, Squire found that in Grade X only three to four per cent of the instructional time was devoted to reading, declining to two per cent in grade XII. Though English teachers seemed agreed that the goal of secondary reading instruction was to promote more active and critical reading, Squire reported that little was done to achieve it. He stated that when the teachers were asked to comment on the importance of reading instruction they either denied responsibility or claimed they taught reading all the time, but Squire noted that what is always done seldom gets done and reading instruction goes by default.

Moreover, caution must be observed of course, in one's interpretation of a developmental reading program since it seems to be different things to different people. Smith (1963) found this to be true in his study of the status and character of

reading programs in a sample of seventh and eighth grade schools in Missouri. Reading programs of some type, Smith found to be present in 114 of the schools studied, but when he applied certain criteria of comprehensiveness the number was reduced from 114 to 30. Applying further criteria of quality of these 30 schools the number was reduced further to seven. When discussing reading programs, make-up and character must be clearly defined, otherwise what exists may be little more than a program in name only.

That college students sense the need for reading instruction on the secondary level seems evident in a study conducted by Artley and Burton (1970) of the reading ability of entering freshmen in the College of Education at the University of Missouri--Columbia. As part of our study we asked if the students could recall any type of reading instruction being given in high school. Of those responding to this item 129 out of a total of 194 responded "no." Since we did not ask them to indicate type, the "yes" response might have indicated an organized course on the seventh grade level, a unit on reading in a language arts class, or vocabulary lessons in a history class. But the significant response was in answer to this question. "If you did not have any type of reading instruction in high school do you feel now that you might have profited from it had it been provided?" Of the 129 who said they had no high school instruction, 121 indicated that they felt it would have been of value to them. The need for a continued developmental program is present. Ample evidence is also present to indicate that the need is not being met.

Developmental Programs--What are They Like

In Early's survey, "What Does Research in Reading Reveal About Successful Reading Programs" (1969), a bibliography of 84 references is appended to her descriptive account and analysis of various kinds of secondary reading programs and approaches to instruction. Approximately 50 of her references dealt with developmental programs, and on analysis almost that number of different approaches was described. This attests to Strang's comment that, "The best thing that can be said of high school and college programs today is that they are evolving. In a sense they are experimental. Many different kinds of programs are being tried out," (Strang, 1962). Consequently, at this point it is rather difficult to see distinct patterns of developmental programs that have evolved. Trends, though, may be in these directions:

1. Units dealing with aspects of reading and study taught as part of the language arts or English program.

2. Short term intensive programs (one semester, four weeks, summer, etc.).

3. Voluntary programs for college bound, or, in fact, any student who wishes to continue work in reading.

4. Reading taught in conjunction with English instruction (This may mean many different things. Unfortunately it frequently means little).

5. Reading and study taught in conjunction with one or several of the content areas.

6. Separate classes distinctly designated as reading and included as part of the regular secondary curriculum.

7. Free or sustained reading (Feder (1966), McCracken (1969, and others).

Since detailed descriptions of reading programs may be found in a number of sources in the literature (Early, 1969; Artley, 1968; Olson and Ames, 1970; Karlin, 1968) as well as in such journals as the English Journal, Journal of Reading, The Reading Teacher and other, little purpose would be served here in adding to these descriptions.

However, I do want to emphasize one of the trends above--reading taught in conjunction with one or several of the content areas--as the one that possibly has the greatest potential for funtional value. Early says it well in these words:

> ...In a well-run school system, the teaching of reading would proceed smoothly and efficiently from the primary grades where the beginning skills would be mastered by all, to the intermediate grades, where basic study skills would be applied to reading in the content areas, through the junior and senior high schools, where reading skills, habits, and attitudes would be extended and refined as students encounter increasingly complex materials. All instruction in reading would take place in the regularly scheduled subjects of the curriculum. There would be no need for extra reading classes, whether these are conceived as "developmental" for students at every level of achievement, or as "remedial" or "corrective," since potential reading disabilities would have been diagnosed as early as primary grades and preventive measures applied. (Early, 1969, pp. 536, 537)

Early admits that this is an ideal concept, but a functional one since on the secondary level, progress in reading would be assessed in a manner that would go beyond the use of a standardized reading test to include a "...study of the amount and quality of voluntary reading and the effects of achievement in all school subjects."

Insofar as the secondary level is concerned we would agree thoroughly with Early's contention. Obviously one cannot read in a vacuum. One reads or studies literature, science, history, mathematics, home economics, and industrial arts. Though there are certain competencies common to all these areas, there are also abilities that to varying degrees differentiate one area from another. Moreover, the vocabularies differ, and the kinds of content that one would use for enrichment reading would differ. All this means that the teaching of reading cannot be divorced from the teaching of a given body of content. In fact, when the chips are down one would be forced to admit that the teaching of social studies, for example, is essentially that of teachin; students to comprehend, react to, and apply to behavior pertinent social concepts. The teaching of history is teaching students to read history . And who should assume that responsibility other than the teacher of history, geography, or social problems?

But as logical as the idea may be, the teacher feels that the body of content that he has to "cover" is so extensive that no time remains to teach reading or even to deal with it in any way. Herber, as well as others, contends that the teaching of reading of a given body of content cannot be divorced from teaching the content itself (Herber, 1970). However, he points out there is a distinct difference between teaching reading in a reading class where the curriculum is a set of competencies, and teaching reading in a content area where the curriculum is a set of ideas or concepts. In the latter situation the teacher examines the content (assignment) with which his students must deal to determine the

structure within which the ideas are inbedded. His responsibility then is to help his students develop the skill or understanding necessary to reconstruct those ideas. Herber's text, Teaching Reading in Content Areas, shows teachers how to combine in an effective manner the teaching of reading and the teaching of content, or better said, the teaching of reading through the teaching of content, whether the content be literature, science, or mathematics.

Problems of Organizing Developmental Reading Programs

But in returning to our basic question--Are secondary developmental reading programs feasible?, the answer lies quite likely in the problems faced by those who have had experience in organizing and conducting such programs. The programs will or will not be feasible to the extent to which those problems can be resolved. And there are problems, let there be no doubt about it.

The first, mentioned over and over again as a reason for the absence of developmental programs or for their questionable value, is the absence of qualified personnel--supervisors as well as teachers. Martin pointed this out in his study of the reading programs in the upper-Midwest areas. Bowren in New Mexico indicated that 76 per cent of the teachers would not qualify for certification under newly adopted standards. Twenty-two per cent of the teachers reported not having had a single course in reading methodology. Squire in discussing reading as taught in English classes, commented on the poor quality of instruction as well as its absence.

His findings were particularly disturbing since he found that in 50 per cent of the schools studied, a "reading specialist" was employed and usually that person was a member of the English department. "Apparently," Squire wrote, "such staffing does not guarantee success," (Squire, 1965). Farr, Laffey, and Brown found in their study of Indiana secondary schools that the major obstacle to the development of programs was lack of qualified personnel. In the programs studied 69 per cent of the teachers had no undergraduate training and 58 per cent had no graduate work. And so it goes!

Removing the roadblock of unqualified personnel seems to be a problem of the first order, and its resolution appears obviously to be in the hands of teacher education institutions themselves. A survey of the number of teacher education inst tutions offering a required course in the teaching of secondary reading, at least for English majors, would be an interesting and informative one. I would venture a guess that the number would be relatively few. Apparently no one, even in the department of instruction itself, feels sufficiently impelled to insist on the obvious.

But one has reason to doubt that even with an ample supply of trained personnel, much progress can be made in reading programs if the administrative leadership, chiefly the building principals, are uninformed or apathetic about the need for or the quality of such programs. This fact was referred to by Bowren in his study of programs in New Mexico and implied by others. Bowren was distressed by the astounding lack of concern on the part of those who should be responsible regarding the need to have reading

instruction reach all students. He concluded that "...until principals are willing to give priority to the development of a quality reading program which will minister to every pupil...very little change in present-day conditions will come about." (Bowren, 1970) We have reason to agree.

Another series of deterrents to secondary reading programs shows up in the study of Farr, Laffey, and Brown to which reference has been made several times. They report that along with the lack of qualified personnel were lack of facilities, cost of added personnel, cost of materials, and lack of time in the schedule. Note if you will that underlying these so-called obstacles is the assumption that secondary reading is an extra, something to be added to an already overloaded schedule, something that will demand extra dollars from an already depleted budget, something that will require extra rooms when we already use the all-purpose room for all purposes.

If reading is considered a part of the on-going program in each of the content areas as Herber and others have pointed out, most of these deterrents will no longer be valid. The teaching of literature or science, for example, is the teaching of reading of literature or science, as we have pointed out, not something extra to be added. Catterson (1965) in summarizing a group of IRA Conference papers on the teaching of study skills emphasized this same point. Though she was speaking of the development of study skills the same comment could be made concerning reading in general. She wrote, "The authors of these papers have made it obvious that they think of study skills (reading) not as something to teach, but as a way to teach--a way of teaching which advances not only the

student's knowledge of subject matter but his ability to learn other subject matter independently and at will." In other words Catterson was not talking about reading programs as something to be added, but something that should be a part of just good content area teaching. Early (1969) reiterated the same idea, for she sees in the ideal secondary developmental program no need for reading teachers as such, since reading would be infused into all school subjects and handled by all teachers as a mode of learning. What is required here is a change in point of view toward secondary reading rather than the addition of something to what already exists.

Finally, a disturbing element observed in the descriptions of secondary reading programs, and certainly it must be an element in their lack of effectiveness, is the absence of any coordinated pattern or system of instruction--an organized curriculum if you will. We commented on the variety and diversity of programs described by Early in her report. We referred to Strang's statement that secondary programs were evolving, that they were experimental. Certainly this is desirable, providing we can begin to see the emergence of a consensus as to what a developmental program should do, the dimensions that comprise it, and the organizational structure that will most effectively achieve these objectives. As it is we seem to be riding off in all directions in secondary reading--even in the remedial component.

Evidence of my contention is both stated and implied from the studies to which we have referred. In 1963 Simmons (1963) reported from his study of five North Central states that the

programs were narrow in scope and rigidly administered. Five years later, Martin (1969) studying the same schools to see what progress had been made in the interval, found that there was still an absence of programs proposed as theoretically sound by Simmons. Bowren (1970) in New Mexico reported that in schools having reading services the programs were organized as isolated entities, purely remedial in scope rather than being a "cooperative component of the curriculum." In fact there seemed to be little evidence of the idea that reading should permeate the whole curriculum.

Coupled with the confusion over the direction that a developmental program should take in order to achieve maximum maturity on the part of all students, is the absence of agreement as to the type of instructional materials to be employed to carry out the program objectives. This hardly could be otherwise, for if one is not clear on where he is going, he likely would be uncertain about the best vehicle to use to get there. Graham reported that pacers, tachistoscopes, films, reading kits, and a variety of teacher made materials constituted the predominate type of instructional materials being used. Bowren found that many of the programs centered around the use of mechanical hardware which he considered questionable. Squire found more than twenty-five different drill and workbooks in the schools he surveyed but, as he indicated, not used in any coordinated system. When one couples a program lacking direction, with a hodge-podge of unrelated instructional materials, and a teacher lacking training we have just about what we find--a discouraging situation.

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